

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend claims 1, 2, 8, 11 and 15. Please cancel claims 3, 10 and 16. The currently pending claims after amendment are listed below.

1. (Currently Amended) An instant messaging computer program product operating in a first computer system attached to a network of computer systems, said computer program product including a plurality of processor executable instructions recorded on signal-bearing media, wherein said instructions comprise:

an incoming message function, said incoming message function receiving incoming instant messages from users of other computer systems attached to said network, said other computer systems attached to said network executing respective instant messaging applications, said incoming message function further informing a **first** user of said first computer system of receipt of said incoming instant messages;

an outgoing message function, said outgoing message function sending outgoing instant messages to said respective instant messaging applications executing in said other computer systems attached to said network; and

an availability reporting function, said availability reporting function reporting availability status of said **first** user to one or more said respective instant messaging applications executing in said other computer systems attached to said network, wherein said availability reporting function automatically infers whether said **first** user is available by accessing calling a calendar application to access calendar data concerning said **first** user stored in at least one calendar data file maintained by said calendar application, said calendar application being an application independent of said instant messaging application.

1 2. (Currently Amended) The instant messaging computer program product of claim 1,
2 wherein said availability reporting function further automatically infers whether said ~~first~~ user is
3 available from at least one indicium of availability from the set consisting of: (a) whether the first
4 computer has received any input from the ~~first~~ user within a predetermined time period; and (b)
5 whether the first computer is in a locked state.

3. (Cancelled)

1 4. (Original) The instant messaging computer program product of claim 1, wherein said
2 availability status reported by said availability reporting function includes a reason for inferring
3 unavailability.

1 5. (Original) The instant messaging computer program product of claim 1, wherein said
2 calendar data includes normal hours of availability.

1 6. (Original) The instant messaging computer program product of claim 1, wherein said
2 calendar data includes events.

1 7. (Original) The instant messaging computer program product of claim 1, wherein said
2 network is the Internet, and wherein:
3 said incoming instant messages are received from an Internet server;
4 said outgoing instant messages are sent to said Internet server; and
5 said availability status is reported to said Internet server.

1 8. (Currently Amended) A method for performing instant messaging in a first computer
2 system attached to a network of computer systems, comprising the steps of:
3 receiving incoming instant messages for a first user in said first computer system from
4 users of other computer systems attached to said network, said other computer systems attached to
5 said network executing respective instant messaging applications;
6 sending outgoing instant messages to said respective instant messaging applications
7 executing in said other computer systems attached to said network;
8 receiving a request for availability status of said first user from an instant messaging
9 application executing in a second computer system attached to said network; and
10 responsive to receiving said request for availability status, reporting availability status of
11 said first user to said instant messaging application executing in said second computer system
12 attached to said network, wherein said step of reporting availability status comprises
13 automatically inferring whether said first user is available by accessing calling a calendar
14 application to access calendar data concerning said first user stored in at least one calendar data
15 file maintained by said calendar application, said calendar application being an application
16 independent of said instant messaging application.

1 9. (Original) The method for performing instant messaging of claim 8, wherein said step of
2 reporting availability further comprises automatically inferring whether said first user is available
3 from at least one indicium of availability from the set consisting of: (a) whether the first computer
4 has received any input from the first user within a predetermined time period; and (b) whether the
5 first computer is in a locked state.

10. (Cancelled)

1 11. (Currently Amended) The method for performing instant messaging of claim 8, wherein
2 said availability status ~~reported by said reporting availability step~~ includes a reason for inferring
3 unavailability.

1 12. (Original) The method for performing instant messaging of claim 8, wherein said calendar
2 data includes normal hours of availability.

1 13. (Original) The method for performing instant messaging of claim 8, wherein said calendar
2 data includes events.

1 14. (Original) The method for performing instant messaging of claim 8, wherein said network
2 is the Internet, and wherein:

3 said incoming instant messages are received from an Internet server;

4 said outgoing instant messages are sent to said Internet server; and

5 said availability status is reported to said Internet server.

1 15. (Currently Amended) A computer system providing an instant messaging function,
2 comprising:
3 a programmable processor;
4 a network interface connecting said computer system to a network of computer systems;
5 a display for displaying information to a user of said computer system;
6 an incoming message function executable on said programmable processor, said incoming
7 message function receiving incoming instant messages from users of other computer systems
8 attached to said network, said other computer systems attached to said network executing
9 respective instant messaging applications, said incoming message function further displaying said
10 incoming messages on said display;
11 an outgoing message function executable on said programmable processor, said outgoing
12 message function sending outgoing instant messages to said respective instant messaging
13 applications executing in said other computer systems attached to said network; and
14 an availability reporting function executable on said programmable processor, said
15 availability reporting function reporting availability status of ~~said a~~ first user to a second user
16 , said first user being a user of said computer system, said second user being a user of an instant
17 messaging application executing in a second computer system attached to said network, wherein
18 said availability reporting function automatically infers whether said first user is available by
19 accessing calling a calendar application to access calendar data concerning said first user stored in
20 at least one calendar data file maintained by said calendar application. said calendar application
21 being an application independent of said instant messaging application.

16. (Cancelled)

1 17. (Original) The computer system of claim 15, wherein said network is the Internet, and
2 wherein:

3 said incoming instant messages are received from an Internet server;

4 said outgoing instant messages are sent to said Internet server; and

5 said availability status is reported to said Internet server.